

How to Get Money for Your Teen Space Project

Background: Given the current state of library funding, you probably cannot pay for your teen space project from the library's budget and will need to look for outside funding.

Best sources: The best place to start is close to home – that is, with *local sources*. These include:

- Friends of the Library. Many Friends groups are willing to support tangible projects like teen space remodels or creation. They may even be willing to hold a special fundraising event for a well-designed and justified project.
- Library Foundation. If your library has a foundation, be sure to explore the possibility of support from this source.
- Local service clubs. Service clubs like Kiwanis and Rotary do fundraising so they can support various local projects. Some have formal application processes, while others are more informal and rely on personal contacts. The best approach is through a member.
- Community foundations. Community foundations are often the best formal funding source for local projects. You can find out if there is a community foundation that covers your area by using the Community Foundation Locator at <http://classic.cof.org/locator/>. Many community foundations have websites, and almost all have formalized application procedures.
- Private foundations. There may be a private family or individual foundation in your community. These small private foundations often have favorite causes they support and sometimes restrict giving to those causes, but they're worth checking out. Since they are generally unstaffed, they may be difficult to identify and contact, but usually people who are "in the know" in the community, such as your library director or library board members, can guide you to them. You may also find some helpful leads and information in the bibliography of state and local foundation resources on the Foundation Center website at http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/topical/sl_dir.html.
- Local businesses. There are a couple of ways that you can appeal to local businesses for support for a teen space project. First, they have a vested interest in having young people – their future employees – be literate and educated. Second, having an attractive teen space gives teens a place to be after school, so they are not "hanging around" on the streets or in stores. Larger corporations that operate in your community may be listed in the Foundation Center's National Directory of Corporate Giving, available in many libraries. Company websites are also good sources of information about priorities, giving policies, and deadlines.

Beyond local: It is considerably more difficult to get money from state, regional, or national sources for a small local project like teen space creation or remodel. The best place to start is usually your state library's LSTA grants office or building consultant. While LSTA does not support construction or renovation programs, it may be a source for computers or other technology, if those are well integrated into an innovative project or service program. If your state library has a building consultant (in California, this would be Richard Hall, rhall@library.ca.gov), that individual may be able to suggest possible funding sources for your project.

You may also want to consult one or more of the following reference sources;

- From the Foundation Center:
 - Grants for Libraries and Information Services
 - National Guide to Funding for Libraries and Information Services
 - Grants for Information Technology
- From ALA: The Big Book of Library Grant Money
- Directory of Building and Equipment Grants: A Reference Directory Identifying Building, Renovation, and Equipment Grants Available to Nonprofit Organizations. Loxahatchee, FL. : Research Grant Guides, 2001. 6th edition, 232pp

An excellent current awareness source is the Library Grants Blog maintained by Stephanie Gerding and Pam MacKellar, <http://librarygrants.blogspot.com>.

Tips for general approach: Before you approach any potential funding source, there are certain steps that you should take:

1. Consult with your library director or other appropriate administrator. Make sure that you have organizational support for your funding quest. Your director, administrator, or other people in your library may have valuable suggestions to offer or good contacts with potential funders.
2. Even if you are approaching a local source that is "close" to the library, such as the Friends group, do a good job of planning your project and develop a clearly written, well-organized, and compellingly justified short proposal. If you've never written a proposal before and don't know what to include, there is an excellent free online tutorial from the Foundation Center, the Proposal Writing Short Course, at <http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/shortcourse/>.

Wishing you the best of luck with your project!